

Minutes
King County Rural Forest Commission
November 12, 2003
Preston Community Center

Commissioners present: Gordon Bradley, Dennis Dart, Lee Kahn, Bill Kombol, Fred McCarty, Doug McClelland, Doug Schindler

Commissioners absent: Jean Bouffard, Rudy Edwards, Matt Mattson, Dave Warren

Exofficio members: Karen Wolf

Staff: Kathy Creahan, Bill Loeber, Benj Wadsworth

Guests: Julie Keough, Julie Stangell, Michael Brathovde

Doug McClelland called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

Minutes Approval

Motion 1-1103 “To adopt the October 2003 minutes as written.”

Dennis Dart commented that, regarding permitting for the Uplands project, the buffer on 40% slopes should read 50 ft., not 183 ft.

Motion moved, seconded and approved with correction.

Staff Report

Benj reported that the fall stewardship class in Maple valley was cancelled due to low enrollment. In lieu of the classes, WSU Coop is conducting a series of workshops on a variety of topics of interest to small forest landowners. Staff and WSU Coop need to market the class more intensely – they are open to ideas.

Benj and Kristi attended a workshop in Portland on November 7 entitled “Barriers to Sustainable Forestry.” While in Portland, Benj met with staff from Ecotrust to discuss their forestland investment fund and their market connection initiative. They have funding to invest in forestland with the intention of demonstrating that sustainable forestry that meets FSC standards is economically viable. The market connection initiative is an effort to link FSC certified forest landowners with builders and architects that are adopting “Built Green” standards, one of which is the use of certified wood.

Staff from Ecotrust are also planning to conduct a workshop on the development of forestry coops on Vashon on December 9. Hopefully there will be people from off-island that are interested as well.

On November 19, Benj is planning to attend a workshop in Seattle instructing builders and architects on how to incorporate certified wood into their projects.

Forestry staff is in the process of developing their 2004 workplan. He welcomes input from the Commission.

There is a satellite conference on the development of forestry coops on November 18. Those interested can attend at the WSU Coop office in Renton.

Benj added two items to the agenda: resolution of the 4G issue discussed at the last meeting and a briefing about the Taylor Mountain harvest.

2004 Comprehensive Plan amendment

Karen Wolf distributed copies of the public review draft and the two code sections, 21A (permitted uses in the zoning code) and 19A (land segregation) that are pertinent to the RFC. The 2004 amendment is the first amendment since 2000 that can involve substantive changes. Any amendments to the plan will have associated changes to the code that will implement the plan.

One of the main recommended changes is to allow the creation of only non-buildable lots in the Forest Production District. This amendment was proposed in 2000 but not included in the final adoption of the 2000 Plan. Landowners would still be allowed to segregate to 80-acre lots, and building would be allowed on any existing lot. The intention is to ensure that forestry remains viable without the intrusion of non-forest uses such as residential development.

Other proposed amendments include the allowance of museums in a forestry or farm structure in the FPD or APD. Doug Schindler asked if there is a specific proposal for a museum or if there is any definition as to what type of museum would be allowed. The intention is that it would be a museum focused on resource uses – i.e. farming or forestry. Doug McClelland asked why you would want a museum in the FPD. Museums might be appropriate in the rural area, but not in the FPD. There was general agreement to this effect.

21A.08.050 proposes to allow the “miscellaneous repair of tools and machinery” in the APD and FPD. A lot must be at least 5 acres, and the area used for repair cannot exceed 1% of the

lot or a total of 5000 square feet. Doug asked if this proposal was brought forth by the Agriculture community and if staff is assuming that what works in the APD would work in the FPD, which might not be a good assumption. Creating businesses in the FPD will draw people into the FPD, which is not conducive to forestry. Businesses like a saw shop should be located in the Rural Area. Bill Kombol disagreed, commenting that if mineral extraction is allowed in the FPD, then machine repair should be too. Discussion ensued about whether or not “machine repair” would involve repairing only the landowners equipment, or would it involve opening a business to repair others’ equipment? Doug suggested the need to do further review to better understand the impact on the FPD.

Code 21A.08.080 would allow sawmills in the Rural Area on lots at least 10 acres in size. There was general agreement that this is a good idea. The 10-acre limitation is to ensure that a sawmill is buffered from residential and agricultural uses. Bill Kombol commented that some of the rural land zoned RA-10 is so zoned because it is environmentally sensitive.

Code 21A.30 would allow the expansion of home occupations in the Rural Area. Currently the maximum allowable indoor space dedicated to a home occupation is 20%. The amendment would differentiate between indoor and outdoor space and allow up to 1% of the lot size up to a maximum of 5000 square feet to be used for a home occupation.

Doug asked if there are any specific rezones proposed in the draft. He suggested that as the RFC discusses the amendments, it is important to remember that personal interests should not be entered into the discussion.

The Comp Plan comment deadline is January 9, but Karen is willing to take comment from the RFC a little later than that.

Kathy Creahan summarized the discussion as follows:

- All agreed that museums should not be allowed in the FPD.
- The issue of machine repair needs further discussion.
- Sawmills should be allowed in RA-5 as well as RA-10, and the lot size should not be a limiting factor. Rather, attention should be paid to buffers and other ways to limit the impact on neighboring landowners.

Doug emphasized that it is important for the RFC to address these issues. All agreed to hold a special meeting on December 12 from 9:00 – 12:00 to discuss the amendments and provide timely feedback. Dennis Dart commented that there are other issues impacting forestry that should also be discussed. Benj will distribute prior to the meeting an issue paper that he has been working on for the public meetings. If anyone has a specific issue that they would like to discuss, please e-mail it to Benj prior to the meeting.

Bill Kombol commented that there are a number of areas in the FPD that do not meet the criteria for the FPD and should be rezoned rural.

Doug Schindler asked about some of the policy changes affecting parks. Karen is working on those too.

Cedar-Green Initiative

Benj introduced Mike Brathovde from the Friends of Rock Creek and displayed a map of the Cedar-Green initiative. He feels that the RFC could be most helpful not by discussing how to remove the development rights from the property, but rather by focusing on what the next step would be and what forestry might look like in this area in the future. The Cascade Land Conservancy is working on acquiring development rights through a variety of strategies. Benj pointed out the peninsula of FPD land that juts into the Rural Area. The Friends of Rock Creek refer to the area as Ravensdale Ridge. It totals about 3400 acres. Benj questioned what the possible outcomes might be. Is 80-acre residential development appropriate in this area? Is WADNR interested in owning the land with the development rights removed? How about a non-profit? Are there smaller private forest landowners that would be interested in owning the land? What is an appropriate number of forest landowners in this area? Benj got a message from Michelle Connor at CLC suggesting that the RFC write a letter to Doug Sutherland asking that this area be a pilot project for a community forestry effort.

Bill Kombol commented that this land could easily be managed for timber production if the development rights are removed. It is worth about \$700 - \$1000/acre for forestry. Most of it is in young stands of Douglas Fir about 20-yr old. Julie Keough commented that the value goes up significantly once a property is replanted following harvest. Julie Stangell asked if the property can be managed aggressively given the proximity of residential neighborhoods. Doug commented that the County and CLC are trying to ensure some sort of certainty that forestry will be possible in this area, and this should be a selling point to interested buyers. Bill Kombol commented that he does not think "community" is important. The important part is that the land is a good investment from a financial standpoint. The owner of the neighboring land would be the most likely buyer (assuming that the neighbor is managing the land for timber). Mike Brathovde commented that these lands are totally appropriate for forest management. Benj asked what size landowners would be most likely. There is an individual west of this area that owns 140 acres and is managing it for timber. Are there other "hobby foresters" like this out there? Dennis commented that the bottom line is that the price will have to be right. There has to be a return on the investment. The ideal buyer will be a medium-large landowner interested in purchasing 1000 acres or so. It is important to keep it in a single ownership. Kathy asked if

anyone would be willing to assist Cascade Land Conservancy in finding interested buyers. Benj asked how the Comp Plan proposed amendment to prohibit development on new lots in the FPD would affect the marketability of this land. Bill Kombol commented that because zoning is political and can change, it will not have a great effect.

Critical Areas Ordinance update

Kathy Creahan commented that the proposed CAO will address forestry on lots platted after 1960 that require a 4G permit. The proposal calls for a “non-conversion 4G forest practice permit.” This permit would allow forestry in critical areas if the land is enrolled in CUT or is a “forest tract” in a subdivision. The property would have to have a long-term forest management plan, and the owner would have to agree to a development moratorium. Also, if the land is in or contains a wildlife habitat conservation area, forestry would be allowed subject to the WDFW or King County species recovery guidelines. Lee Kahn commented that since the wildfires in California, she has heard a lot of concerns from forest landowners about the expense and difficulty of getting a 4G permit to conduct a thinning for fire prevention reasons. She feels that the CUT restriction should not be applied, as many landowners that might need to thin for fire prevention reasons might not be enrolled in CUT. Statewide, only 38% of landowners are enrolled.

Doug asked what it has cost Dennis to go through the 4G permit process at DDES for the Uplands project. Including DDES costs and Dennis’ time, it has cost the landowner over \$10,000, and the landowner has and a forest management plan and an ordinance requiring forest management as part of the pilot project. He still does not have a permit. Bill Kombol commented that the absolute cheapest that a 4G permit can cost is \$5000 or \$6000. Dennis asked who in the County is qualified to implement WA State forest practice rules. At \$138/hour, there needs to be someone that can do it quickly and efficiently. Kathy suggested that the RFC should propose a change to the state law so that the State would administer 4G permits. Doug suggested that the RFC needs to send a strong message to the County that the system needs to change, or else forestry will become obsolete in King County.

Benj reminded the Commission that they had agreed to write a letter about the CAO, commenting that the only criteria for being allowed to practice forestry in critical areas should be a forest management plan. He asked if the RFC would like to address the 4G problems through this letter, as the CAO addresses the problems that the RFC has brought up. Dennis commented that they should write two letters, as the CAO might not pass. Kathy commented that the CAO does not address Lee’s earlier comment regarding thinning for fire prevention. All agreed to submit comment that landowners should not have to be enrolled in CUT to get a non-conversion 4G permit. Benj commented that making a landowner sign a moratorium essentially has the same effect as making them enroll in CUT. Discussion ensued about how a moratorium

is applied. Doug summarized that the letter should state that the County permit should implement the state forest practice rules, and there should be County staff that understand the rules and can implement them efficiently. He suggested that he and Dennis will write a letter about the 4G problem specifically. They will circulate it among the Commission before sending it.

Taylor Mountain harvest plan

Bill Loeber gave an update about the Taylor Mountain Plan. The Plan was completed and signed in August. Bill has been working on laying out the first harvest. He welcomes input from the Commission about the intended harvest. The plan is to harvest all of the mature alder, leave the conifer, and possibly harvest some of the maple. Klaus Richter, a biologist at WLRD, suggested leaving some or all of the maple as wildlife habitat. The harvest will be done under a state forest practice permit. At this point, staff is waiting for the valuation from the consultant. Benj commented that it will be important to involve the public, as part of the focus of the Forestry Program is demonstrating that forestry can be done viably in the rural area. Doug commented that the RFC can help in an educational role when the harvest happens. He asked where the revenue will go. It will be spent on the management of County forestlands and additional forestland acquisitions. Doug Schindler commented that it should be made very clear to the public that the revenue is going back into this property for the development of trails or other public amenities – that will be the best way to generate public support. Dennis commented on the need to use some of the revenue for reforestation and other management activities following the harvest. Doug McClelland commented on the need to do the harvest soon to capitalize on the price of alder. Discussion ensued regarding the need for a good outreach effort surrounding the sale.

Next meeting

Friday, December 12, 9:00 – 12:00, Preston Community Center.

Note - the meeting schedule for the next 5 months is as follows:

December 12

January 14

March 10

May 14

June 11